

Public Realm Framework

Overview

A Memorable Downtown

While the master plan integrates all modes of transportation, ensuring good pedestrian, bicycle, auto and transit access to and throughout downtown, the public realm framework focuses specifically on expanding and improving the pedestrian environment.

The downtown public realm framework establishes a system of streets, promenades, greenway “park blocks” and open spaces that knit the downtown into a coherent whole.

Key Framework Elements

The public realm framework (illustrated on the next page) provides a blueprint for the improvement and creation of new street amenities and open spaces throughout the downtown; specific design concept proposals would require further refinement, review and approval. The framework’s key elements are the following street and open space types, summarized below and detailed on subsequent pages:

Public Square:

- Centrally located to serve as the primary gathering and activity center in the heart of downtown at P and 13th.

Primary and Secondary Retail Streetscapes:

- Including specific requirements that support and improve retail viability on P, O, 13th and 14th Street corridors.

Festival/Event Spaces:

- Provide additional spaces for the wide range of Lincoln activities programmed throughout the year.



Parks and Open Spaces, Arts and Cultural Corridor Promenade:

- Provides a downtown pedestrian and recreational bicyclist multiuse pathway.
- Creates a safe and convenient off-street loop around the downtown core connecting the Centennial Mall, University, and downtown retail uses.

KEY ELEMENTS:

Primary Retail Streetscape

Secondary Retail Streetscape

Promenade

Arts Corridor

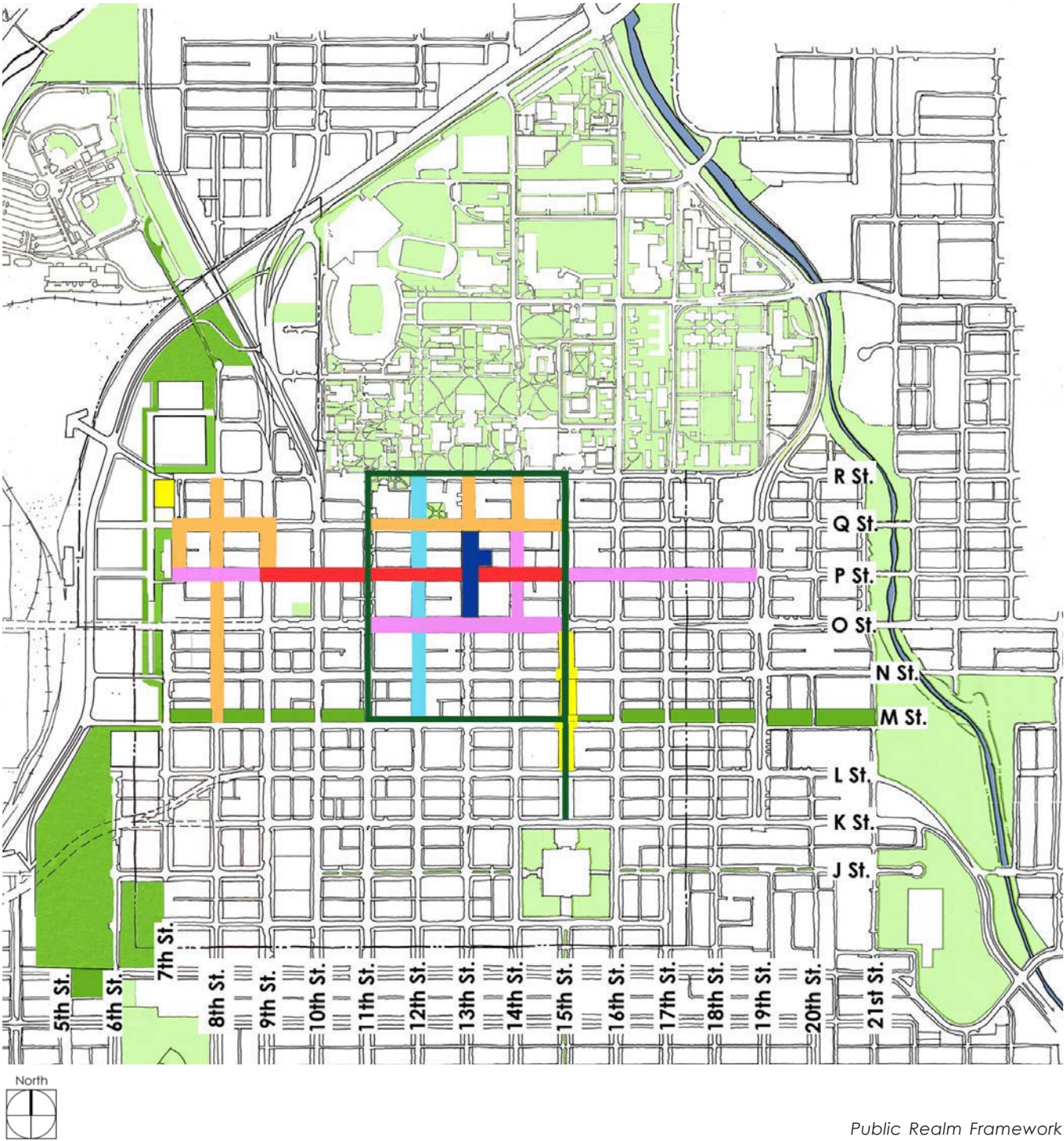
Pedestrian Emphasis Streetscape

Civic Square

Festival/Event Space

New Parks and Open Space

Existing Open Space



Civic Square

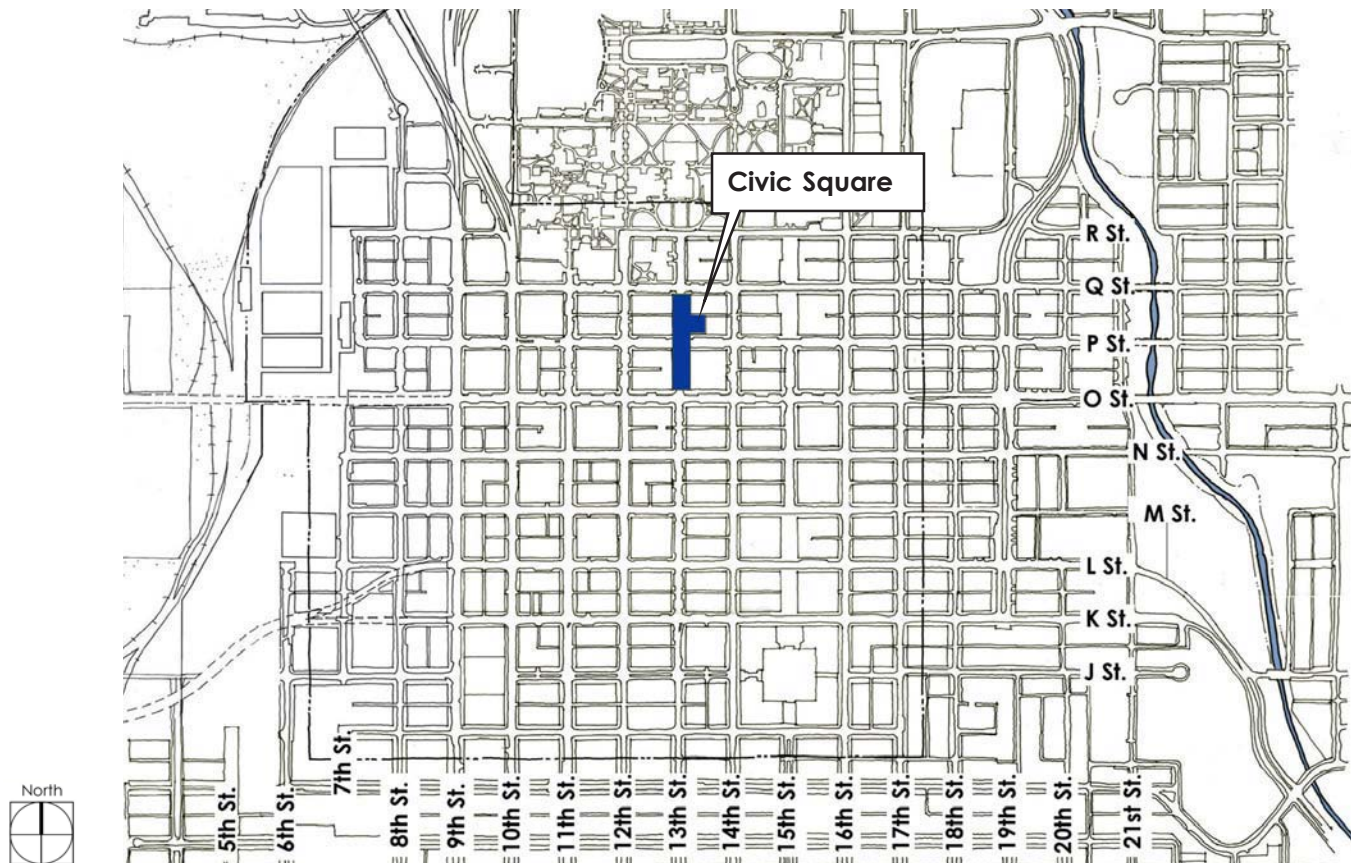
Public squares are an essential part of a successful downtown. Designed correctly, they can create a setting for reinvestment and improve the quality of life for office workers, neighbors, visitors and tourists.

- Provide a dignified setting for a possible future monument or public art.
- Require minimal maintenance.
- Incorporate universal design.

The City's Living Room

The heart of Lincoln's public realm is its "living room" – Civic Square at 13th and P Streets. The square should:

- Serve as the primary civic assembly space in downtown.
- Provide a focus for contiguous ground floor retail activity in adjacent buildings surrounding the square.
- Accommodate a variety of public gatherings and seasonal events year-round.
- Be safe and inviting for all people at all hours.
- Be durable and low maintenance.



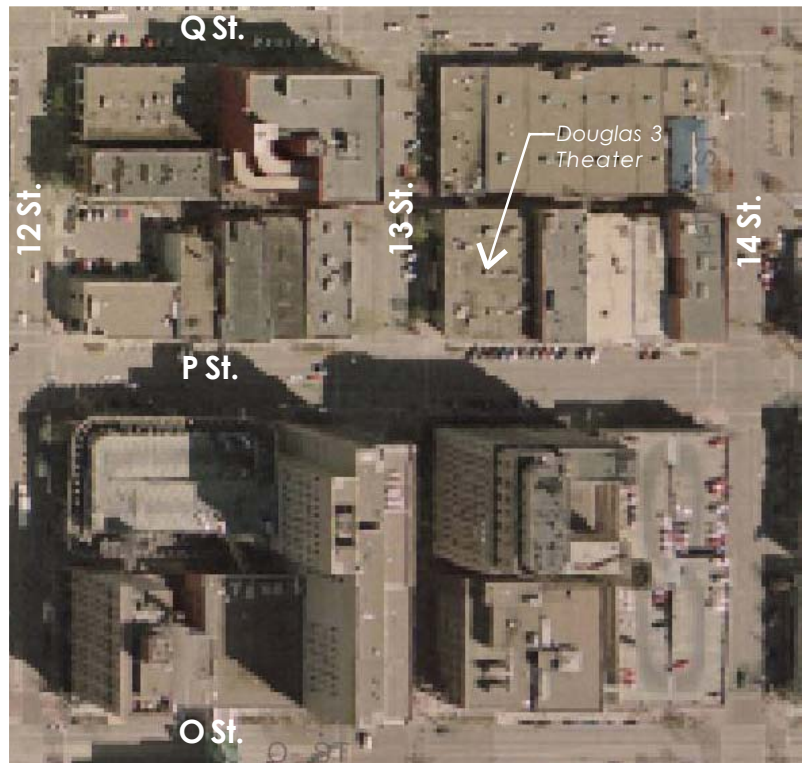
Public Square Diagram

Civic Square

P and 13th

Located at the “heart of downtown,” the square at P and 13th acts as a hinge between the existing 13th Street financial corridor and the planned P Street primary retail corridor. The square would:

- Occupy all but 30 feet of the existing Douglas Theater site at the northeast corner of P and 13th.
- Extend within the existing right-of-way north to Q Street and south to O Street.
- Retain 13th Street roadway as two lanes, with one northbound and one southbound lane.
- Maintain on-street parking along 13th except directly adjacent to the primary assembly space.
- Necessitate the alley between 13th and 14th Streets be “dead-ended” at the site where the existing Douglas Theater now stands.



Existing P and 13th Street Aerial



Proposed Civic Square at P and 13th Streets

Civic Square

Design Elements

Design of the square would include the following:

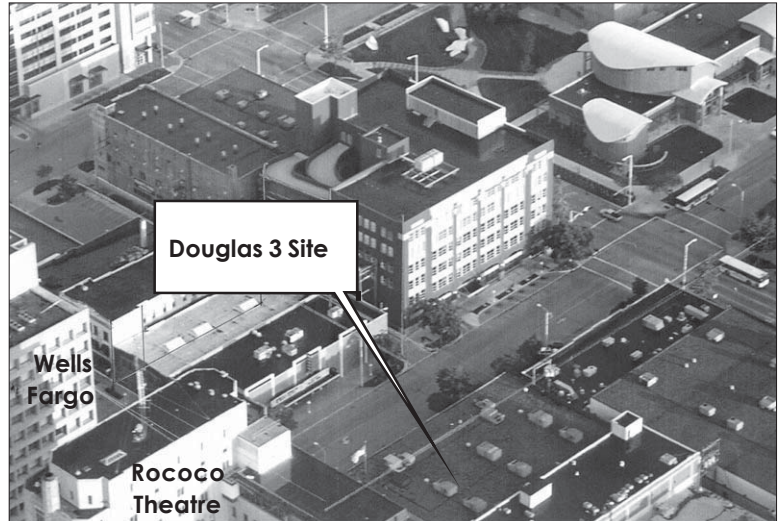
- Special brick or concrete pavers throughout.
- Curbless design to expand the usable space and perceived visual dimensions of the assembly area.
- Possible expansion of the primary assembly area for special events by temporary closure to auto traffic on the adjacent half-block of 13th Street.
- Secondary square areas to north and south along 13th Street, providing passive seating areas.
- Visual and pedestrian linkages north-south from the busy O Street auto corridor to the P Street retail core and beyond to the UNL Campus.
- Possible office parking to be provided below-grade at the square.



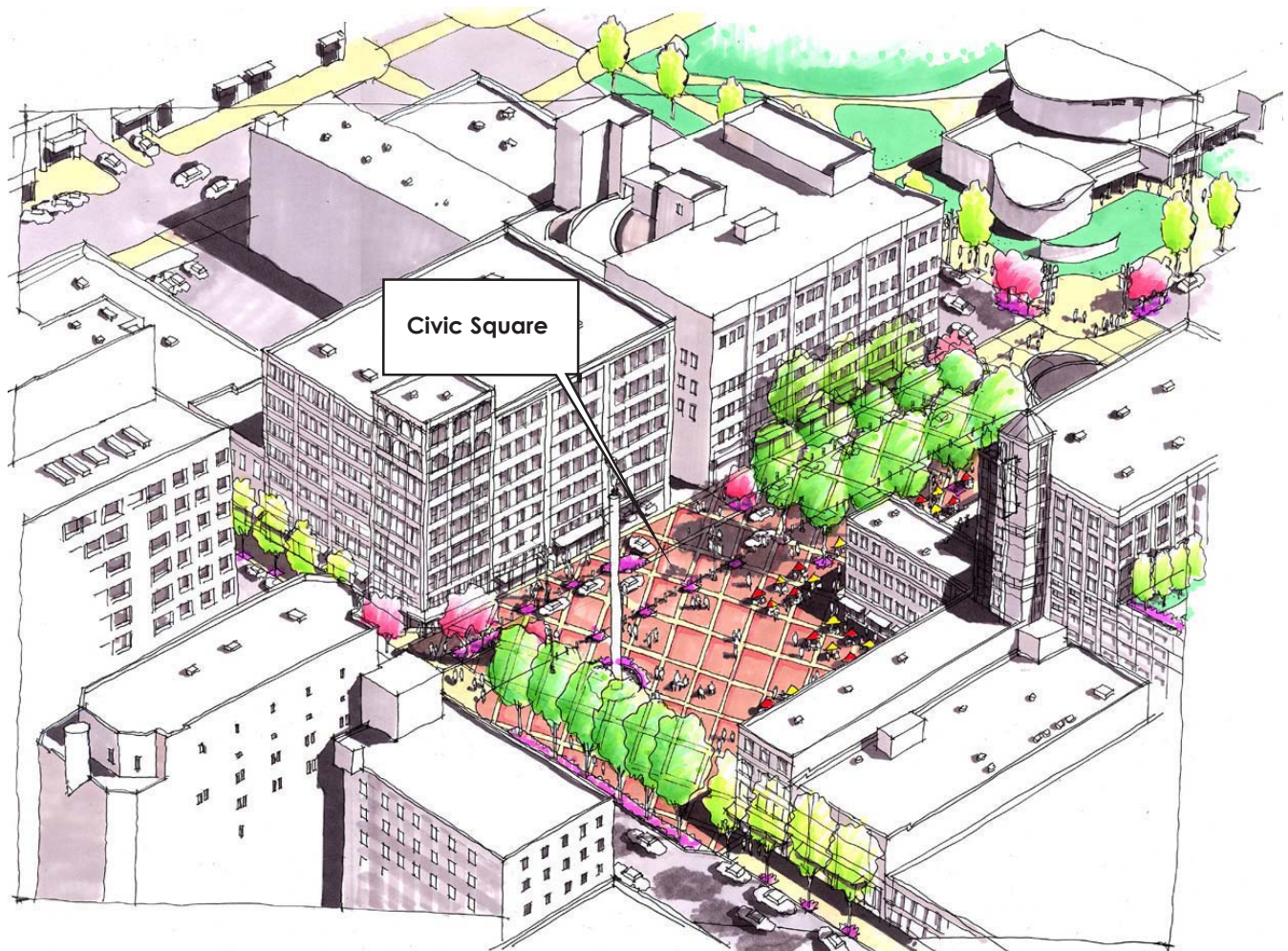
Proposed Civic Square

The square, providing public open space for gatherings, special events and quiet seating and recreation, is intended to be the focus of downtown retail and office development.

Its central location between the O Street auto corridor and the UNL campus allows it to provide direct visual and pedestrian connections between these important areas.



Existing Oblique Aerial of Public Square



Proposed Public Square at P and 13th Street

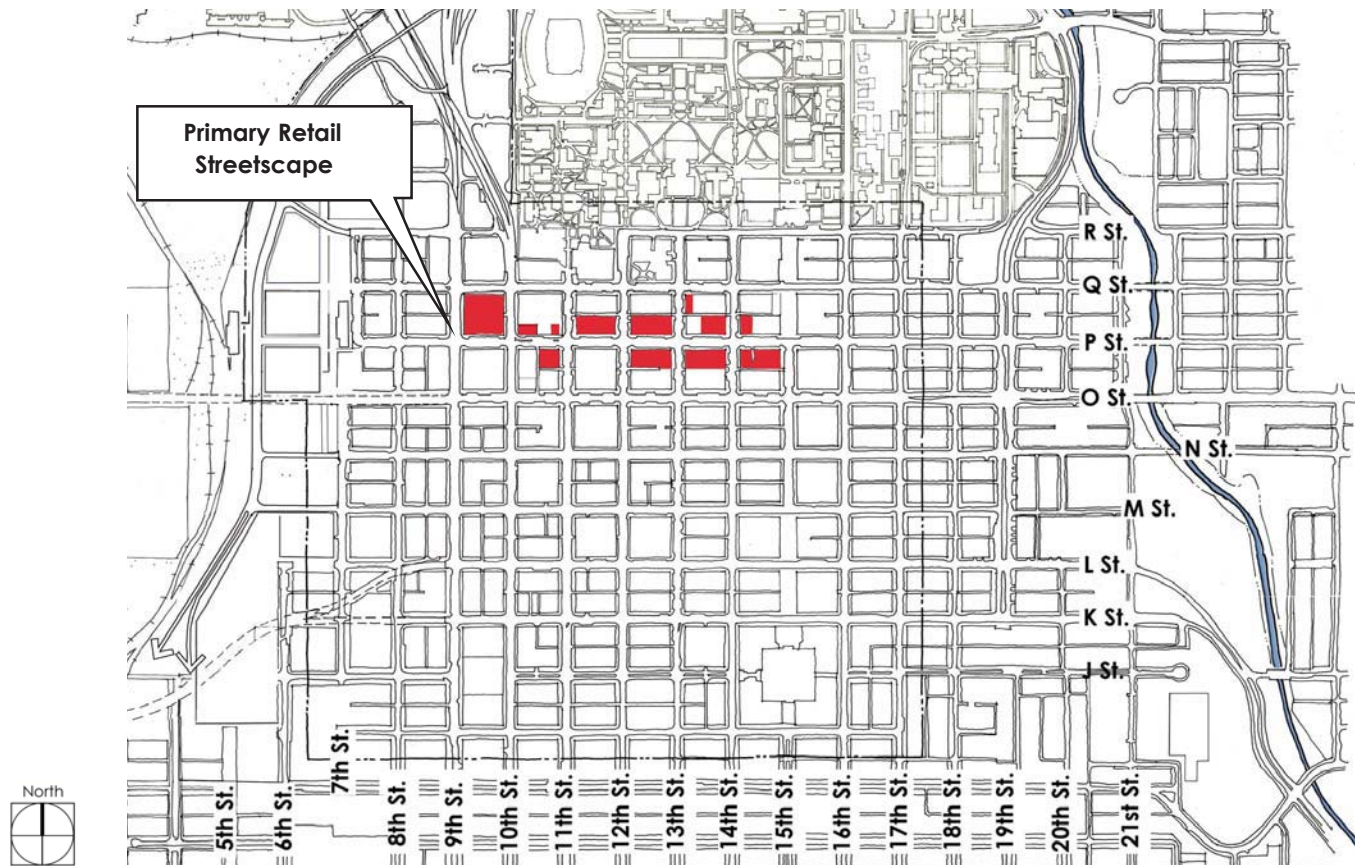
Primary Retail Streetscape

The creation of a successful retail streetscape is a critical aspect of providing a successful public realm and revitalizing downtown Lincoln. P Street, from 9th Street to Centennial Mall, was selected as the primary retail streetscape for several reasons:

- Concentration of existing retail.
- Greatest potential for future retail expansion.
- Primary geographic link between the historic Haymarket District and the locally-recognized heart of downtown, 13th Street.

Coupled with the land use requirements identified elsewhere in this document, retail in downtown Lincoln will be viable. With the erosion of one or more of the retail streetscape design requirements, however, primary retail on P Street will not succeed.

P Street existing conditions and the design elements required for healthy retail are described on the following pages.



Primary Retail Streets Diagram

Existing P Streetscape

The streetscape on P today is a result of separate improvements made project by project. Although significant investment has occurred, the street as a whole lacks uniformity and the design elements needed to support retail development.

Improvements that have occurred along P Street that do support retail use include:

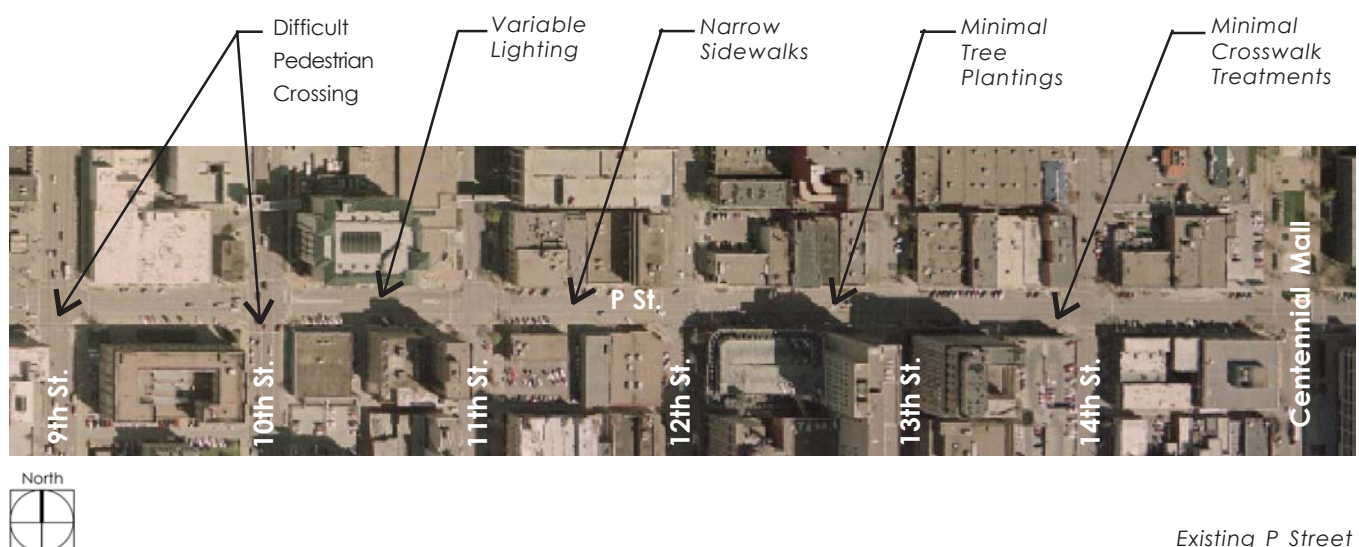
- Well-articulated brick paving at sidewalk corners.

Some of the investment and “beautification” efforts along P Street do not support retail use, however, including the following:

- Seasonal planting beds that narrow the pedestrian “through-zone.”
- Minimal canopy tree plantings.
- Sidewalks providing only a minimal zone for street furniture.
- Inconsistent lighting, with variations in fixture type, height and spacing.
- Minimal crosswalk treatments.



Existing P Street



Existing P Street

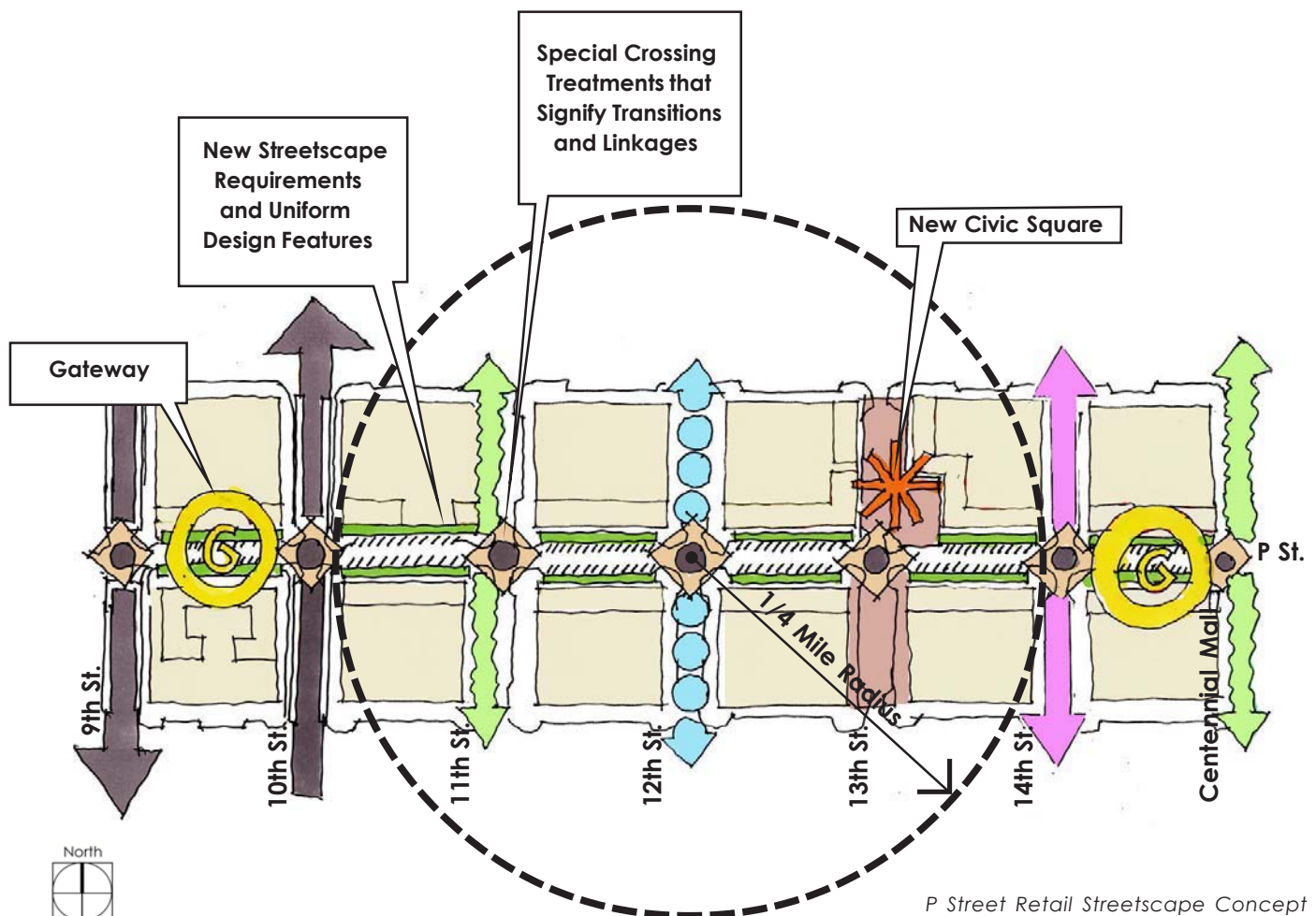
P Street Primary Retail Streetscape Concept

The retail streetscape concept diagram below identifies the critical design elements required to make the pedestrian the priority and foster a vital retail environment. The required design elements are as follows:

- **A walkable length**—ideally, a maximum five-minute walk or approximately a one-quarter mile distance.
- **Uniform design features**—use of consistent materials and elements that create a common thread along the street.
- **High-quality materials**—especially for sidewalks, to support diverse pedestrian and retail activities.
- **Special consideration at particular locations**—for instance, *crosswalk treatments* that signify transitions and linkages to the public square, promenade and arts corridor; *gateways* that define a beginning and end to the primary retail core.
- **Appropriate sidewalk width**—ample yet intimate pedestrian “through-zone” and “furniture zone” for cafe seating, benches for resting, and other pedestrian amenities.

Rigorous Application

These fundamental sidewalk, crosswalk and street design features must be adhered to in a disciplined way in order to provide a pedestrian-friendly, healthy retail environment and public realm.



P Street Retail Streetscape Concept

Proposed Elements

Streetscape elements and design treatments along the P Street retail core create identifiable links and transitions to the following important streets and districts in downtown Lincoln:

- From P Street Primary Retail to P Street Secondary Retail.
- To the civic square at 13th Street and from the square across P Street down 13th to O Street.
- To the Promenade at 11th Street and Centennial Mall.
- To the 12th Street Arts Corridor.

These links and transitions will be created by the design methods described below.

Special Promenade Intersection

At Centennial Mall and 11th Streets, provide treatments for recreation and multi-use path crossings including:

- Information and directory signs.
- Safety paving to mark pedestrian and bicycle crossings.

Special Arts Intersection

At 12th Street, provide opportunities for public art display:

- Sculpture or other art pieces.
- Lighting – distinctive and appropriate to display art.
- Paving – medallions or other artistic treatment.

P Street Civic Square Intersection

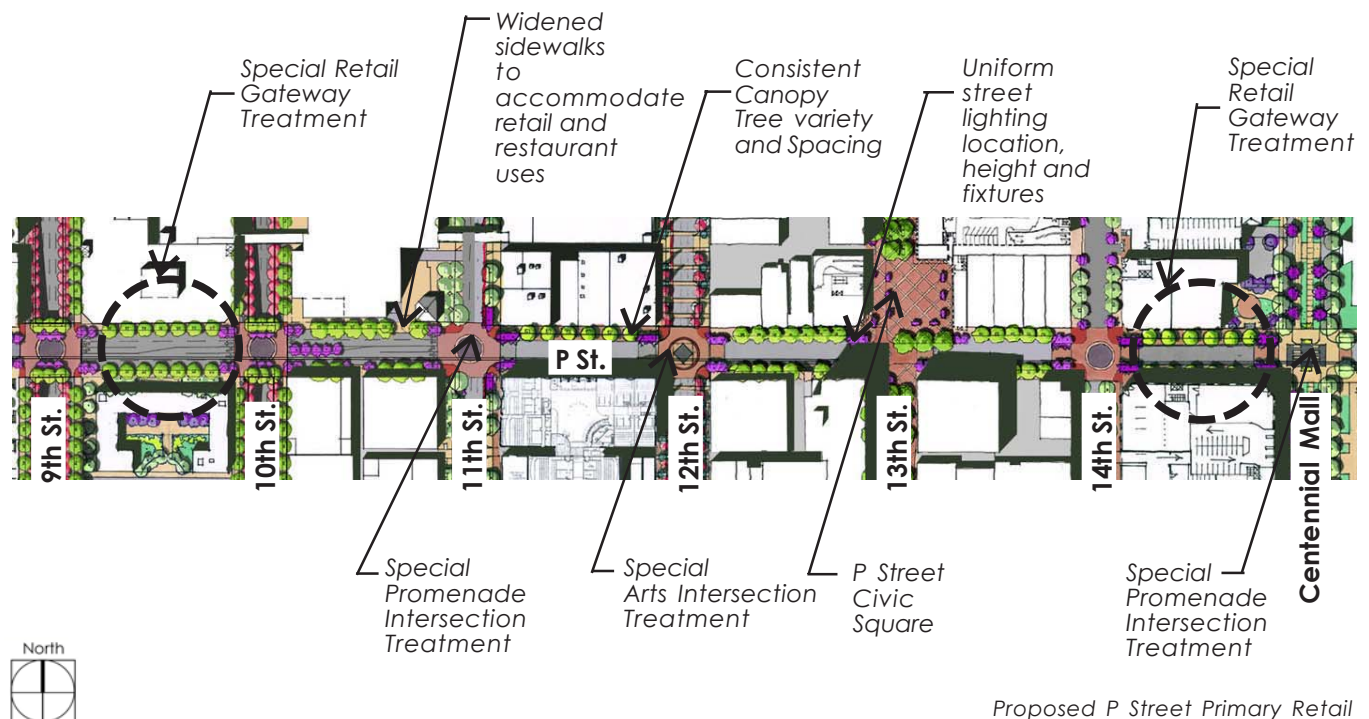
Provide a seamless flow of civic square elements across P Street and continuing on 13th to O Street:

- Paving.
- Lighting.

Special Retail Gateway Treatment

On the blocks between 9th and 10th and between 14th and 15th Streets, create a sense of passage into and out of the P Street primary retail district:

- Kiosks.
- Information and directory signs.



Proposed P Street Primary Retail

P Street Fundamental Requirements

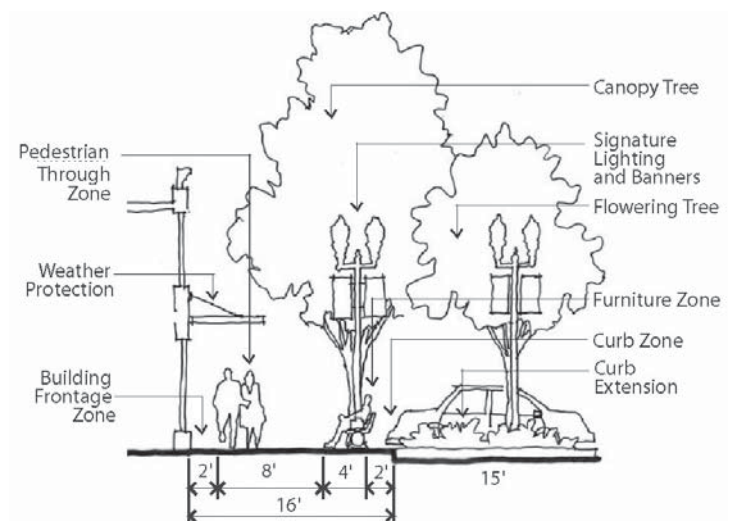
The following requirements ensure that streetscape improvements will define P Street as the primary retail street.

- **Comfortable pedestrian environment** – to support a diverse and dynamic range of pedestrian and retail uses.
- **Widened sidewalks** – to 16' from 12.'
- **High-quality paving** – such as distinctive brick or concrete pavers for sidewalks and pedestrian crossings.
- **Continuous zones** – pedestrian “through zone,” building zone, and furniture zone.
- **Curb extensions** – landscaped with ornamental trees at intersections to slow traffic and identify pedestrian crossings.
- **Additional landscaping** – canopy trees and planting strips between sidewalk and roadway.
- **Pedestrian-scale** – to elements such as lighting, landscaping, furniture, signage and appropriate weather protection.
- **Restrict “corrals”** – for seating along building edge. Require seating corral to be located within or adjacent to the furniture zone.

The existing P Street and new streetscape requirements are illustrated below.



Typical “corral” seating



New P Streets Sidewalk Requirements



Existing P Street